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Saudi Arabia Establishes U.S. FDA Styled Food & Drug Authority

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Report Highlights:
On March 10, 2003, the Saudi Arabian Government established the Kingdom's Food and Drug Authority (FDA). The Government announced that its decision to set up the FDA was necessary to consolidate all government agencies that have been looking after food and drug safety under one authority in order to increase efficiency of the organizations and to enable the country provide the highest possible consumer safety and protection.

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Saudi Arabia Establishes U.S. FDA Styled Food and Drug Authority

On March 10, 2003, the Saudi Arabian Government established the Kingdom's Food and Drug Authority (FDA). The Government announced that its decision to set up the FDA was necessary to consolidate all government agencies that have been looking after food and drug safety under one authority in order to increase efficiency of the organizations and to enable the country provide the highest possible consumer safety and protection.

The organization, which will report directly to the Prime Minister (who is also the King), will be run by a 15-member Board of Directors chaired by the Second Deputy Premier. The other members of the Board are: Minister of Interior, President of the FDA (to be appointed), Minister of Health, Minister of Commerce, Minister of Municipal/Rural Affairs, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Water, Minister of Finance/National Economy, Minister of Industry/ Electricity, Minister of Civil Service, Director General of the Saudi Arabia Standards Organization (SASO), and three appointed experts.

To speed up the completion of the organizational stage, the council of ministers has instructed the experts' committee made up of the aforementioned ministries and SASO to draft and submit the organizational structure of the FDA, identifying authorities of its board of directors, and to spell out detailed tasks of the organization.

Two stages have been laid out by the Cabinet for the FDA to fully commence its duties: the first five-year period started on March 10 when the decree was issued and it involves mostly the organizational and staffing stage including establishing an administrative structure and organizational directory to enable the organization to achieve its goals. At the end of the first stage, the FDA will have an executive organ that will be capable enough to perform all initial tasks and duties. It will be equipped with central laboratories at its headquarter (not yet established). The first stage will also involve moving to the FDA all food and drug related laboratories currently run by four government agencies namely: SASO, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health. Establishing close working relationship between the FDA and local hospitals, universities and local and international private laboratories will be also accomplished at this stage. The second stage starts by March 2008 when the organization assumes its full executive role.

Following are the main duties of the FDA as reported in the Saudi Arabia's only Arabic language business daily newspaper "Al-Eqtisadiah" in its March 11, 2003 edition:

- Ensure food and drug safety and effectiveness for human and animal consumption.

- Responsible for establishing a clear policy for food and drug and devise a plan to achieving the policy. Assuming all formal and standardization aspects relating to food and drug, along with the duties of food safety previously delegated to the country's Permanent Food Safety Committee.

- Ensure the safety of biological compounds and complementary chemical products.
- Ensure the consumer safety of cosmetics and insecticide formulations.
- Ensure safety of electronic products on the public health.
- Responsible for testing the safety and accuracy of medical and diagnosing equipment.
- Join forces with the Kingdom's existing research organizations such as the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) and other scientific research centers including local universities to conduct specialized research to identify any consumer health related problems. The study team will also build scientific data base to be used in education and consultancy services as well as give support to executive programs that deal with food and drug aspects. The FDA will publicize studies and exchange information with local, international legal bodies and scientific organizations to build food and drug database.
- Monitors the licensing processes and set procedures for establishment of food, drug and medical equipment factories.
- Operates on commercial basis, without compromising all its goals. Financing of the FDA will be from its own revenues in the form of licenses fees, fines, etc. against the services extended to beneficiaries.

End of Report